

THIS MONTH

It's early in the year, but this month we review this year's biggest product: Windows Vista. It has been a long while coming, facing several lengthy delays, but as of 30th January, Vista is officially available for owners of new PCs and upgraders alike. You can see what we think of it by reading our review on page 46.

While this will give you an overview of Vista, next month we've got a special feature that will take you through all the new features and show you how to get everyday jobs done quicker and easier. If you fancy upgrading your PC to Vista, next month's *Upgrade Workshop* will show you how to do it.

It's a big month for Microsoft, as we also have a review of Office 2007. It's a big departure in terms of look and feel, and you can read our review on page 44.

Now the laws have been relaxed, we also have our first review of an MP3 FM transmitter, Kensington's Universal FM Transmitter for MP3 Players, on page 12. Add in our usual range of reviews and there should be something for everyone.

David Ludlow

Deputy Editor

david@computershopper.co.uk



DELL

Dimension E521

★★★

£932 inc VAT

Dell's Dimension E521 is the first Dell PC we've reviewed that uses an AMD processor, rather than an Intel chip. Although not quite as fast as the Core 2 Duo E6300-based Evesham Solar XK (reviewed on page 13), it was only a few points behind in our benchmarks. It's quick enough for all but the most demanding tasks.

Despite its power in Windows applications, this PC isn't suitable for gamers. The Radeon X1300 Pro graphics card managed only 15.4fps in our Doom 3 test and 10.5fps in our Call of Duty 2 benchmark. You'll have to lower the detail settings or replace the X1300 with a more powerful PCI Express graphics card for a smooth frame rate in the latest 3D games.

Like other Dimension series desktops, the E521 has a BTX-standard case. Although not totally silent, it is very quiet and we had to press our ear against the computer to hear anything louder than a low hum while it was running a processor-intensive video-encoding test. If you decide to fit a faster graphics card, you'll have to choose a model with a quiet cooling fan to maintain the peace and quiet.

If the 250GB hard disk isn't roomy enough for all your files, you're limited to adding only one more internal hard disk, as there's just one empty 3½in drive bay. At least you won't have to fiddle with fitting screws: each disk clips into a mounting frame that is slid into the drive bay. There aren't any empty spaces for 5¼in drives, but the computer already has two optical drives, making it easy to copy discs. There's also a memory card reader.

Given that the E521 has Windows XP Media Center and a remote control, it's a bit of a shame that it doesn't come with a TV tuner. You can add one easily using one of the six USB2 ports, the empty PCI Express x1 slot or one of the two free PCI slots.

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Hi-Grade DMS II 3000 ★★		Nokia E61 ★★★★★		Iiyama X4865-B1 ★★★★★	
Mesh Elite E6600 Express ★★★★★		Sony Ericsson K800i ★★★★★		LG 32LC2D ★★★★★	
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Acer Travelmate 8215WLMi ★★		Printers & Scanners page 24		Samsung 215TW ★★★★★	
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PC Nextday Zoostorm 55-7701 ★★★★★		Dell Multifunction Laser Printer 1815dn ★★★★★		Photography page 28	
Samsung Q35 Red ★★★★★		Epson AcuLaser C1100 ★★★★★		BenQ DC X720 ★★	
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		Kyocera Mita FS-C5025N ★★★★★		Canon PowerShot G7 ★★★★★	
		Samsung ML-2510 ★★★★★		Casio Exilim SX-Z70 ★★	
				Casio Exilim Zoom EX-Z850 ★★★★★	
				Fujifilm FinePix F20 Zoom ★★★★★	
				Nikon Coolpix L4 ★★★★★	
				Pentax Optio W20 ★★★★★	
				Sony Cybershot DSC-W30 ★★★★★	



Although the graphics card has both DVI and D-sub ports, Dell's 19in 1,280x1,024 monitor can be connected using only D-sub. Images had a slight pinkish cast when we first connected it, but the auto-adjust feature corrected this. Both our greyscale and colour-transition tests were displayed remarkably smoothly. The base has little tilt and no height adjustment, however.

The monitor isn't widescreen so it's not ideal for watching movies, but it has a higher vertical resolution than a typical 1,440x900 widescreen 19in display and will suit those who regularly work on long text documents. If you use this computer to watch films, you'll appreciate the powerful bass of the 7.1 surround-sound Creative T7900 speakers.

Oddly, the Dimension comes with a wireless Logitech mouse but a Dell-branded USB keyboard. The mouse feels very comfortable and responsive, although its large size won't please those with small hands. The keyboard lacks feedback and feels spongy, but it does have a couple of handy USB 1.1 ports and glow-in-the-dark media keys.

Unless you want to play games, the Dimension is a decent family PC that's quiet and performs well in Windows. If you aren't bothered by a little noise, though, Evesham's Solar XK is more attractive. It has fewer internal expansion options, but it's a bit quicker in Windows, has a dual digital TV tuner and costs significantly less.

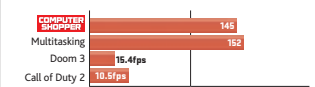
Alan Lu

SUMMARY

- ✓ Quiet; fair 2D performance
- ✓ Decent-quality monitor
- ✗ Only one free 3½in bay; no TV tuner

DESKTOP PC AMD Athlon 64 X2 4200+, 1GB RAM, 250GB hard disk, 256MB ATI Radeon X1300 Pro, DVD+-RW DL, DVD-ROM, 19in LCD
PART CODE UKDHSONL-D12E16
SUPPLIER Dell 08703 533930
DETAILS www.dell.co.uk

PERFORMANCE (see page 56)



PC SYSTEMS

FAQ

Q What does the Insert key on my keyboard do?

A In any program where you enter text, such as Microsoft Word, pressing the Insert key toggles overwrite mode on and off. With this switched on, new text that you type replaces character-by-character any text after the cursor's current location. Word is in overwrite mode when the OVR indicator in the status bar at the bottom of every window is black, rather than grey.

In most Windows applications, pressing the Shift and Insert keys together pastes the contents of your clipboard into your current document.

You can change the way the Insert key works in Word by clicking Tools, Options and selecting the Edit tab. If you want the overtype mode on permanently, select the Overtyping mode tick box. You can use the Insert key as a short cut for the Paste command by selecting the Use the INS key for paste tickbox.

Alan Lu

PC systems and storage expert

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Video page 32

ATMT 320GB H855 Mobile Media HDD	★★★★
Canon MV960	★★★★★
Freecom DVB-T USB Stick	★★★★★
Humax Duovisio PVR-9200T	★★★★★
Kworld DVB-T PE310	★★★
SlingMedia Slingbox	★★★★★

Audio page 34

Apple iPod Shuffle	★★★★★
Behringer B-Control Deejay BCD2000	★★★★★
Logitech AudioStation	★★★★★
Logitech X-230	★★★★★
Logitech X-540	★★★★★
Logitech Z-5450	★★★★★
Philips SA9200	★★
Philips SLA5520	★★★★★
Sandisk Sansa e270	★★★★★

Networks page 36

Devolo DLAN 200 Avdesk Starter Kit	★★★★★
D-Link DI-S24	★★★
D-Link RangeBooster N 650 Router	★★★★★
TrendNet 300Mbps Wireless N-Draft Firewall Router	★★★
US Robotics Cordless Skype Dual Phone	★★★★★
Zyxel Prestige 336M	★★★

Storage page 38

Akasa Integral P2 LAN	★★★★★
ATMT HD160 Ultra-Portable Hard Disk 20GB	★★★
Buffalo LinkStation Pro 250GB	★★★★★
Hitachi Deskstart T7K250	★★★★★
Iomega Portable Hard Drive FireWire/USB 2.0 120GB	★★★★★
Seagate 160GB Portable External Hard Drive	★★★★★
SmartDisk FireLite Xpress 60GB	★★★★★
Western Digital 500GB My Book Pro Edition	★★★★★

Components page 40

Antec P150	★★★★★
Asus EN8800GTS	★★★★★
ECS GeForce 6100SM-M	★★★★★
ECS KN3 SLI2	★★★★★
ECS PN1 SLI2 Extreme	★★★★★
Gigabyte GV-RX195P256D-RH	★★★★★
Intel Core 2 Duo E6700	★★★★★
Leadtek WinFast PX8800 GTX TDH	★★★★★
MSI P965 Platinum	★★★★★
PowerColor X1950 Pro	★★★★★

Software & Games page 44

Avanquest RadioTracker 2	★★★★★
Cakewalk Sonar 6 Producer Edition	★★★★★
Dark Messiah of Might and Magic	★★★★★
Diskkeeper 2007 Home	★★★★★
Exabre The Filter	★★★★★
Guild Wars: Nightfall	★★★★★
Kaspersky Anti-Virus 2006	★★★★★
Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2007	★★★★★
Microsoft Office 2007 Basic Edition	★★★
Microsoft Windows Vista Home Premium	★★★★★
Mozilla Firefox 2.0	★★★★★
Roxio Easy Media Creator 9 Suite	★★★★★
Sam & Max: Episode 1: Culture Shock	★★★★★
Sid Meier's Railroads	★★★★★
Symantec Norton Ghost 10	★★★★★
WinZip Pro 11	★★★
Yosemite Technologies Backup PC Desktop 8.1	★★★

BYTE SIZE

HELA Glider Mouse

★★★

£152 inc VAT

Hela's Glider Mouse is designed to minimise repetitive strain injuries (RSI) and other ergonomic problems by reducing wrist movement. It looks more like a puck from an air hockey arcade game than a mouse, but it feels well made.

You control the cursor by moving the silver puck across the black pad and click by pressing down on the puck. It takes a while to get used to, but it is fairly accurate. A scroll wheel and various short cut buttons are within easy reach, but the buttons are customised using a series of switches rather than a software utility.

The Glider Mouse may be helpful to some RSI sufferers, but it's expensive. A touch pad or USB trackball costs far less and would also be effective.

Alan Lu

SUPPLIER www.keyboardco.com
DETAILS www.hela.co.uk

ART LEBEDEV STUDIO Optimus Mini Three

★★★

£135 inc VAT

The Optimus Mini Three is a keypad consisting of three small OLED screens that display short cut icons relevant to the program you're using. When pressed, the keys trigger a keyboard short cut in the application. If you switch to another program, the buttons are automatically updated with suitable icons. Holding down a modifier key accesses a further range of short cuts. You can choose from a predefined set of short cuts for popular programs or set your own.

The buttons can also show information such as how many unread emails are in a webmail inbox; pressing the button opens the account in your browser. The Optimus Mini Three is clever and looks slick but it's very expensive.

Alan Lu

SUPPLIER www.aria.co.uk
DETAILS www.artlebedev.com

HI-GRADE DMS II 3000

★★★

£733 inc VAT

Many media centre PCs come with only a single TV tuner so, unless you add another, you can't watch one channel while recording another. Hi-Grade's DMS II 3000 PC has two tuners but both are analogue only, so they can't receive Freeview broadcasts. From 2008, the analogue TV signal will be switched off, so you may find you still need to replace the existing tuners, or add another via USB or the free PCI slot.

The computer's 250GB hard disk has enough space for a sizable library of shows, although there's no room inside the case for another internal disk if you outgrow it. You can easily connect an external disk using one of the four USB ports or three FireWire ports, though.

Browsing your catalogue of recorded shows, photos and music is easy thanks to the included remote and Windows XP Media Center Edition. The compact wireless keyboard is little bigger than a typical notebook's, and feels somewhat cramped. It has no numeric pad, and the built-in trackball is inaccurate, so it may need replacing with a more comfortable set if you do much more than surf the net.

The single-core Pentium 4 processor is quick enough for everyday tasks and had no trouble playing our high-definition video clips. However, the DMS II 3000 is hamstrung by only 512MB of RAM, and its performance in our tests barely matched our reference PC so you'll need to add more memory for tasks such as editing video or image files.

The Nvidia GeForce 6600 graphics card doesn't share system memory like an



integrated graphics chip, but it's not particularly powerful and can play modern 3D games only at low detail settings. Older titles should be fine, though. The GeForce 6600 can be replaced with a faster PCI Express graphics card, but there isn't enough room for a long or double-width card. This will rule out a powerful choice with a bulky cooler.

There's no shortage of ports for hooking up your video and audio equipment. You can record video from sources such as VCRs using the S-video and composite inputs. You can connect an analogue surround-sound amplifier to the 7.1-channel RCA outputs, or use the optical or coaxial S/PDIF ports with a digital amp. DVI, D-sub and S-video ports let you connect monitors or a

TV. There's also a front-mounted LCD, which displays information such as the song currently playing.

We were disappointed with this PC's slow Windows performance and its lack of a digital TV tuner. These shortcomings would be easier to live with if it were cheaper, but at this price it's outclassed by Mesh's Viva 940 Pro Media Center PC (see 'Also consider...'). Although it doesn't have as many connection options as the DMS II 3000, Mesh's PC is comprehensively quicker in Windows, has twin digital tuners and costs only £66 more, making it much better value.

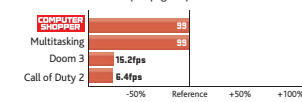
Alan Lu

SUMMARY

- ✓ Good range of ports
- ✗ No digital tuners
- ✗ Poor Windows performance

MEDIA CENTRE PC 3GHz Intel Pentium 4 530, 512MB RAM, 250GB hard disk, 128MB Nvidia GeForce 6600, DVD+/-RW DL, twin analogue TV tuners
SUPPLIER Hi-Grade Computers
020 8532 6111
DETAILS www.higrade.com

PERFORMANCE (see page 56)



Also consider...

MESH Elite E6600 Express

★★★★★

£1,049 inc VAT



Underneath the Elite's sturdy black and silver case is one of Intel's latest Core 2 Duo processors, the E6600, with a generous 2GB of RAM. This PC should handle most computing tasks without complaint for some time to come. While not as noisy as some PCs we've heard, the hum and whirring of the fans is intrusive in a quiet room.

Gamers will be pleased with the Elite's 256MB GeForce 7950GT graphics card, which breezed through our 3D graphics tests. This is the first Core 2 Duo PC we've seen with an SLI motherboard, so you can add a second Nvidia graphics card at a later date. The 19in Sony monitor



isn't ideal for photo editing, but its glossy finish makes colours look rich and bright.

Mesh's Elite E6600 Express is powerful in games and Windows. It's generously specified, a competent all-rounder and a good choice for a family PC.

DESKTOP PC 2.4GHz Intel Core 2 Duo E6600, 2GB RAM, 300GB hard disk, 256MB Nvidia GeForce 7950GT, DVD+/-RW +/-DL, DVD-ROM, 19in LCD SUPPLIER Mesh Computers 08447 360440 DETAILS www.meshcomputers.com ✓ Fast in Windows and games; plenty of RAM
✗ No memory card reader FULL REVIEW Jan 2007

EVESHAM Solar XK

★★★★★

£840 inc VAT

Most of the PCs we review tend to come in midi tower cases, which usually have plenty of drive bays and PCI slots for adding internal peripherals. Evesham's Solar XK comes in a smaller mini tower case. It isn't as small as a mini PC, but it doesn't have much more scope for upgrades. Inside, there's only one empty 3½in drive bay for adding another hard disk, one spare 5¼in bay for adding another optical drive and one free PCI Express x1 slot. Fitting cards into the slot could be troublesome since it's wedged between the graphics card and TV tuner.

With 1GB of RAM and a Core 2 Duo E6300 processor, the XK isn't slow in Windows. It fared well in our benchmarks with scores of 207 in our video-encoding test and 160 in our multitasking test, so it's fast enough for all but the most demanding tasks.

Unfortunately, it's not well suited to playing games. Its GeForce 7600LE graphics card managed 19fps in Doom 3 and 11.4fps in our Call of Duty 2 test. You'll have to turn down the detail settings if you want to play the latest 3D games. This is a shame given the Creative X-Fi sound card, which has EAX processing and can make games such as Doom 3 sound more atmospheric. If you want to take full advantage of the X-Fi card for listening to music or films, you'll need a better pair of speakers. The included Creative Inspire T3100 set lacks mid-range definition and makes vocals sound muddy.



Though the computer isn't great for games, you can keep yourself amused with its TV tuner. It's a dual digital device, so you can record one digital channel while watching another. You can browse recorded shows, as well as your music and photos, using Windows Media Center and the included remote.

Although the Nvidia GeForce 7600 graphics card has both DVI and D-sub ports, the 19in widescreen Cibox monitor has only a D-sub socket. Its 1,440x900 resolution is ideal for watching movies or working on

two documents side by side, but there was coarseness in both our colour and greyscale transition tests. With a limited ability to display subtle shade and colour differences, it's not ideal for photo manipulation.

Evesham's Solar XK needs a more powerful graphics card to cope with modern games and, even considering its small size, it has a disappointing lack of room for upgrades. It's a decent family PC at this price, though, with good Windows performance, a 19in widescreen display and a dual digital TV tuner.

Alan Lu

SUMMARY

- ✓ Dual digital TV tuner; Media Center
- ✓ Quality sound card
- ✗ Limited expansion options

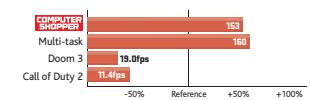
DESKTOP PC 1.86GHz Intel Core 2 Duo E6300, 1GB RAM, 250GB hard disk, 256MB Nvidia GeForce 7600 LE, DVD+/-RW +/- DL, dual digital TV tuner, 19in widescreen LCD

PART CODE EVOSOLARXKJAN07

SUPPLIER Evesham 08701 609500

DETAILS www.evesham.com

PERFORMANCE (see page 56)



BYTE SIZE

ART LEBEDEV STUDIO Mus2

★★★

£50 inc VAT



If we gave out awards for instruction manuals, this striking optical mouse would be a winner. Its brief manual is sketched in a comic-book style, with a Russian flipside that seems intriguingly surreal.

The mouse is shaped like a huge cursor, and connects to your computer wirelessly using a supplied USB dongle. It requires two AAA batteries, which are included.

It looks fantastic and slides smoothly on its supplied mouse mat, but the Mus2 isn't comfortable to use. Its narrow body doesn't support the palm, causing aches for some who tried it. The tiny buttons are tricky to operate, and there's no wheel at all. At this price, we just can't see the point.

Simon Handby

SUPPLIER www.boysstuff.co.uk
DETAILS www.artlebedev.com

KENSINGTON Universal FM Transmitter for MP3 Players

★★★★★

£22 inc VAT



This gadget lets you tune into an MP3 player on your car radio. It fits directly into a lighter socket, from which it is powered. Its captive 1.5m audio input cable has a standard 3.5mm jack to fit the headphone port of almost any MP3 player. You simply find a quiet frequency on your car radio, and set it as the transmitter's broadcast frequency using its illuminated display. Dedicated buttons let you set and recall up to three preferred frequencies.

Although there was a small amount of quiet background hiss, sound quality was high and it maintained an interference-free signal. It's good value and, like other CE-marked devices, it's now legal.

Simon Handby

SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk
DETAILS <http://uk.kensington.com>

MESH Viva 940 Pro

★★★★★

£799 inc VAT



Media centre PCs tend to be more expensive than standard computers, but Mesh's well-specified Viva 940 Pro PC costs just £799 including VAT. It's whisper-quiet, too, making it the perfect lounge companion. You can record one programme while watching another thanks to the two digital TV tuners. There are plenty of ports for connecting the Viva to your TV and stereo equipment.

The dual-core Pentium D processor and 2GB of RAM had no trouble playing back our high-definition Windows media files and breezed through our application benchmarks, so it's perfectly suitable as your main PC, too.

The integrated Intel graphics chip isn't suitable for playing the latest games and the half-height PCI



Express x16 slot limits your choice of graphics card upgrades, especially if you want it to remain silent. Nevertheless, Mesh's Viva 940 Pro is an affordable and well-specified media centre PC.

MEDIA CENTRE PC 3.2GHz Intel Pentium D 940, 2GB RAM, 300GB hard disk, Intel integrated graphics, two digital TV tuners, DVD+/-RW +/- DL
SUPPLIER Mesh Computers 08447 360440 DETAILS www.meshcomputers.com ✓ Twin digital TV tuners; powerful in Windows
✗ No good for games FULL REVIEW Dec 2006

BYTE SIZE

ONE FOR ALL Kameleon URC 8308

★★★★
£61 inc VAT

One For All's Kameleon URC 8308 controls up to eight devices. You programme it by typing in the devices' manufacturer codes provided in the manual. The URC 8308 has fixed controls for volume and menus. There is also a set of keys with three functions each. Selecting a device lights up a relevant function for each key. It works quite well, but the fixed functions of the keys mean the remote can't handle your devices' more exotic features.

Logitech's Harmony 885 (reviewed in *What's New*, February 2007) has an LCD and soft keys, so you can control every function of every device. With activity modes that can turn on your TV, DVD and amp with one click, it's a more flexible and better choice.

David Ludlow

SUPPLIER www.pixmania.co.uk
DETAILS www.oneforall.com

TRENDNET ClearLink TVP-SP2

★★★★
£60 inc VAT

TrendNet's ClearLink TVP-SP2 is a Skype speakerphone that's good enough to use in a small meeting room. It connects to your PC via USB. The mono LCD and menu controls let you dial Skype contacts without having to look at your PC's screen. The LCD is slow to update, but it's easy to read.

You can dial numbers directly using the number pad, but the numbers are written underneath the keys rather than above or on them, so you have to concentrate.

Call quality was good and the ClearLink picked up our voice clearly, even at a distance. The speaker was loud and clear, too. If you can cope with the annoying keypad, you'll find the ClearLink TVP-SP2 to be a decent speakerphone.

David Ludlow

SUPPLIER www.scan.co.uk
DETAILS www.trendnet.com

CHOOSING A... PC System

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

PROCESSOR Intel Pentium D 820
MEMORY 1GB
HARD DISK 250GB
STORAGE 16x DVD writer
SOUND Integrated
SPEAKERS Stereo
GRAPHICS Integrated
MONITOR 19in LCD
EXTRAS 56K modem
CONNECTORS 4x USB2, network
SOFTWARE Windows XP Home Edition
BASICS Keyboard, mouse
Recommended minimum in grey

1 The minimum specification of PC we recommend, shown in grey above, is a good starting point when working out your ideal system. This PC would cost around £500 and is perfectly capable of running everyday office, multimedia or education software, as well as doing anything on the internet. But it's an unexciting PC. It will be able to play DVD movies, but they won't sound too impressive and modern games are a no-no.

2 The size and shape of a PC is more important than it used to be. A mini PC costs a bit more and it's less upgradable, but it will take up less desk space and look much more attractive. If you're choosing a media centre PC, make sure you get one that fits in with any other electronic equipment in your living room and that it's quiet.

3 Interested in games? Upgrade to a decent graphics card. Budget cards based on the GeForce 7300 GT graphics processor or Radeon X1600 will cope with this year's games, but to play next year's just as smoothly (and enjoy gorgeous graphics today), you'll want anything up to a GeForce 7950 GX2 or Radeon X1900XTX.

Look for an SLI or CrossFire system if you want to use two graphics cards to get the best graphics performance. Even if you don't want SLI or CrossFire now, it may be worth getting a system that's capable of being upgraded later.

4 The processor above is powerful and it's dual core, so it will handle intensive tasks. If you're going to be doing a lot of video editing, you should consider upgrading to an even more powerful processor. Intel's Core 2 Duo range is our current top choice; as well as being more powerful, it needs less cooling so your PC should be quieter.

5 If you're not interested in games, you can definitely live with integrated or cheap graphics, but there are plenty more reasons to upgrade the memory, hard disk or processor. If you'll be using your PC for serious desktop publishing, music or photo-editing tasks, you need the same kind of processor, memory and disk space as for games. For video editing consider getting two hard disks, perhaps in a RAID array.

6 A quality sound system will enhance all manner of PC activities. To hear the surround

soundtrack of a DVD at its best, you'll need a quality 5.1 speaker system. Games can also use such a system to throw sound effects around you. If you're not interested in games or DVDs (or you don't want to trail wires all around the room), go for a quality stereo pair with a subwoofer to boost the bass instead.

If you're interested in music or want better-quality sound, you'll need to invest in a dedicated sound card. As well as providing enhanced sound, such as Environmental Audio eXtension (EAX), which tweaks the acoustics to make sound appear to be playing in different environments, you'll get higher-quality outputs and more inputs.

7 A 17in LCD is standard but not very exciting and quite small. A 19in LCD costs around £50 more and has the same resolution (1,280x1,024) but is easier on the eye. Twenty-inch LCDs are available from £300 and have a higher resolution (1,600x1,200). These are better for those who want to edit large photos, documents or spreadsheets, run two applications side by side, or just look important.

If you're more interested in entertainment, consider a widescreen monitor. As well as being ideally suited for watching movies, they give you more room horizontally, so you can work on two documents side by side.

Decide if you want a glossy display or not. Glossy displays improve contrast and make images look brighter, but they reflect overhead lights and sunlight easily, making them hard to work with.

8 The standard set of connectors can be improved with extra USB2 ports, to which most run-of-the-mill PC gadgets attach, and a FireWire port for fancy gadgets including most digital video (DV) cameras. Look for a memory card reader if you have a digital camera and make sure your camera's memory card is supported.

9 Windows XP Home Edition is preinstalled on most new PCs. Any extra software bundled should be assessed critically. It may be that you'll never use it. But you may happen across a PC that includes software you'd otherwise have paid for; you'll save lots of money by having it preloaded, although you won't get technical support included.

10 If you have money left over, consider a TV card. This lets you watch TV on your PC screen and record programmes to your hard disk, or capture analogue video from a camcorder.

